

April 12, 2010

To: Jon Laria, Task Force Chairman

From: Sandy Coyman and Stephanie Martins

Re: Indicators Workgroup Status and Next Steps

Where We've Been

The passage of Senate Bill 276 and House Bill 295 – Smart, Green, and Growing – Annual Report – Smart Growth Goals, Measures, and Indicators and Implementation of Planning Visions in the 2009 General Assembly Session, among other things, required the Task Force to make further recommendations on additional measures and indicators.

In the Spring/Summer of 2009, the Indicators Workgroup of the Task Force identified additional smart growth measures and indicators and reported to the full Task Force at its July and September meetings. The workgroup evaluated many indicators in terms of relevance to smart growth, availability of data, and the practical ability to collect information about the indicator on a regular basis.

A letter was sent to the General Assembly in November of 2009 recommending a cautious approach to the adoption of additional mandatory indicators. The fundamental finding of the Indicators Workgroup was that there are many potential indicators; each requiring data, which in some cases can be difficult or impossible to obtain. Further, many indicators provide very useful information about the subject they measure, but they may have only a tenuous relationship to assessing a jurisdiction's smart growth performance. Therefore, the Task Force's primary recommendation to the legislature was that potential indicators be fully studied and vetted before new indicators are legislatively imposed.

Where We Are

The work group is pursuing a process to "test" the indicators presented on the "List of Potential Smart Growth Indicators." The workgroup has enlisted the help of a technical team including: the Maryland Department of Planning, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland, and local government representatives involved in data collection to complete an assessment of the indicators on the "List of Potential Smart Growth Indicators". Participants include Stephanie Martins (MDP), Mark Goldstein (MDP), Jenny King (MDP), Rebecca Lewis and Gerrit Knaap (National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education), Dan Rooney (Harford County Planning & Zoning), Joe Adkins (Frederick City Planning), and Sandy Coyman (Chair of the Indicators Workgroup and Talbot County Planning and Zoning).

This group met in April 8, 2010 and discussed the background and key mission of the technical team. They discussed some broad issues with the list of indicators and each group member was assigned specific indicators to "test".

Next Steps

The group's next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2010 in the form of a conference call. Group members will give a status report on the indicators and present preliminary findings at that meeting.

The technical team will do several things including: collect and report information for each indicator, highlight any issues with data collection, presentation, and interpretation associated with each indicator, and relate each indicator smart growth progress. In short this technical review group will answer the question: do the proposed indicators answer whether Maryland is successfully achieving its smart growth objectives? If not, how can indicators be used to determine what is preventing the achievement of statewide visions and goals?

The technical review group will give a progress report to the Task Force in June, 2010 and again in August. By September 30, 2010, the technical team will produce a final report to the Task Force, which will make any additional recommendations to the General Assembly at that time.